



THE WRITING PROCESS

Glossary of Essay Terms

Whether you are writing a short-answer essay of a few sentences or a take-home exam that may require hours of planning and writing, the vocabulary used in essay examinations is often repetitive regardless of the subject matter or discipline. It is therefore advantageous to have a comprehensive understanding of the terminology, rhetorical strategies, and expectations of essay writing.

OVERVIEW OF VOCABULARY

When a question asks you to:	Write an essay including:
Analyze	a detailed examination of the topic, divided into parts and discussed separately
Argue	your opinion and evidence/support
Compare/Contrast	a discussion of significant similarities and/or differences of two or more items
Critique	your evaluation of a text, pointing out its goals, strengths, and weaknesses
Diagram	a picture, chart, or plan
Define	the exact meaning or precise description of a word or idea
Enumerate	a numbered list
Evaluate	a reasoned judgment with supporting arguments/evidence
Explain	the reasons for or the meaning of something
Illustrate	an example or examples
Interpret	an explanation of what you think something means and/or why it's significant
Outline	the main points and essential details
Summarize	the core ideas of a text or argument
Trace	the development of an idea or a sequence of events
Discuss	any combination of the above